



**State Representative • 3<sup>rd</sup> District**

**Timm Ormsby**

# 2008 Capitol Report

Winter 2008

**State Representative**  
**Timm Ormsby**

**Spokane**

## Committees:

Capital Budget (Vice Chair)  
Housing  
Rules  
State Government & Tribal Affairs  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Education

## Keeping in Touch

### Olympia Office

122F Legislative Building  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia WA 98504-0600  
360-786-7946

### Spokane Office

25 W. Main, #238  
Spokane WA 99201  
509-458-2122

### Toll-free Legislative Hotline

800-562-6000

### TTY for Hearing-impaired

800-635-9993

### On the Internet

[www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/  
members/ormsby](http://www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/ormsby)

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

During this short (60 days) session that began January 14, lawmakers from across the state have an enormous task ahead of us. It is our responsibility, and really our privilege, to follow up on a 2007 session that saw good progress made in a number of areas that are critical to the people of Washington, and especially for those of us who live in Spokane. Among other things, Gov. Gregoire and the Legislature:

- invested a record amount in our students and schools;
- helped our elders cope with the spiraling cost of prescriptions;
- provided health insurance for an additional 38,000 previously uninsured kids;
- cracked down on car thieves and identity thieves;
- OK'd free, all-day kindergarten pilots throughout the state;
- laid the groundwork for paid family leave insurance;
- created jobs and job opportunities for more Washingtonians;
- brought college within reach for a new generation; and
- put nearly a billion dollars in the bank to guard against tax hikes or service cuts.

I'm proud to have been able to work on these and other issues, and much of this Capitol Report will deal with those accomplishments. Looking toward the future, however, I intend to build on those successes here in 2008. When I report back to you after the session concludes, I plan to have good news about affordable housing, property-tax reform, protecting our children from sex offenders, maintaining a strong economy, increasing access to high-quality, affordable health care, strengthening our schools and, as I always say, making Washington a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Now and throughout the year, I welcome your comments, suggestions and questions about these or other legislative matters. It's an honor and a privilege to work for you. Thanks.

Sincerely,

*Timm Ormsby*  
Timm Ormsby

## In this issue:

- Looking back at 2007, forward toward 2008
- The winners: Kids and schools
- Washington's health-care system healthier than ever
- Stronger economy, safer communities
- Spokane hits home run for local projects

# Rep. Timm Ormsby • 3<sup>rd</sup> District

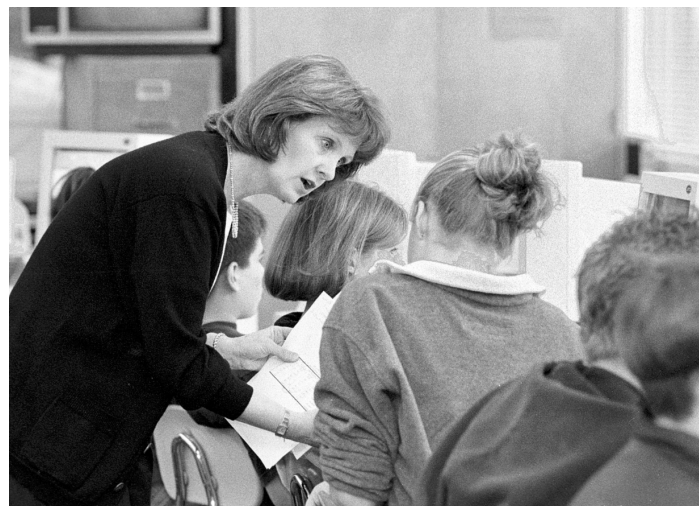
## The People's Agenda

Schools. Health care. Jobs. These are the issues families discuss around the kitchen table. Every family has its own special cares and concerns, but year-in and year-out, these are the three issues our neighbors identify most often as those they want their state Legislature to address. I'm happy to report that we've had success in all three areas. I'll start with education.

### Five-Point Education Plan

Early in 2007 the House Democrats announced a Five-Point Plan to strengthen Washington's education standards and performance. We arrived at this plan by looking at our education system as a complex, living organism that comprises early learning, K-12, career and trade education, two- and four-year colleges and universities, and every level of graduate and post-graduate work. Guided by the plan, we passed legislation that will:

- Improve access to high-quality early childhood education, including all-day kindergarten for children in districts throughout the state. We'll also focus on parent, family and caregiver support, and develop a voluntary rating and improvement system for early learning providers.
- Fund basic education – as the state constitution requires – including school-bus service, special education and technology upgrades. One of the victories I'm proudest of was a \$74.7 million capital-budget investment in our state's high-school-level vocational skills centers.



***Strong schools go hand in hand with a strong state. As a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, I'm fortunate to be able to help write a state operating budget that puts students first.***

- Fully fund the voter-approved I-728 to reduce class sizes, and I-732 to raise teachers' salaries.
- Help students reach their potential and graduate from high school on time through programs such as dropout-prevention and after-school math tutoring.
- Expand access to higher education through Opportunity Grants and increased financial aid.

### Health Care

We're fortunate to live in a city where health care accounts for a significant portion of our economic activity.

The current Legislature and Gov. Gregoire have taken several important steps to make affordable, accessible health care in Washington available to more children, families and individuals than ever before. Among other things, we . . .

- Extended health-care coverage to more than 38,000 additional children, keeping us on track to reach our goal of covering every Washington child by the end of this decade.
- Created the Washington Health Insurance Partnership to simplify and improve the purchasing of health insurance for employees of small businesses, and others without insurance.
- Expanded the capacity of local health departments to provide core public-health functions. These functions include controlling the spread of communicable diseases, improving immunization rates, and addressing environmental health concerns.
- Eliminated the prescription-drug co-payments that countless low-income seniors were saddled with as a result of the federal Medicare Part D plan instituted last year. My friend and fellow Spokane Democrat Don Barlow, in his first year representing our neighboring 6th legislative district, made this the first bill he sponsored, and it was the first 2007 bill signed into law by Gov. Chris Gregoire. Nice going, Don!
- Permitted licensed dental hygienists to provide basic dental services, such as fluoride treatments and teeth-cleaning, in schools and senior centers.

### Good Jobs, Thriving Businesses

It's hard to separate Washington's economy – the job and business climate – from education and health care. Ever notice how intertwined important issues tend to become? Every improvement our state makes in its schools, from pre-K through the graduate level, results in better-educated, higher-skilled and better-qualified workers and employers. Improved access to

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affordable health care results in healthy students who can focus on learning, and healthy workers who are more productive.

During this biennium, as I've mentioned, we made significant investments in education and health care for every age group and in every region of the state. But we also addressed the economy head-on, doing our best to improve Washington State's job and businesses climate. Here are some examples:

- The state's transportation and capital budgets combine to create 43,000 family wage jobs, with benefits. The Public Works Trust Fund will account for an additional 4200.
- We created "innovative partnership zones" to help revitalize communities throughout the state by strengthening connections between research and business. Spokane received one of those designations and obtained state start-up funding.
- Lawmakers invested in Economic Development Councils to help them bring new jobs to local communities and retain those jobs once they arrive – another good Spokane-originated idea.
- In our continuing quest to encourage the development of non-polluting, "smokeless" industry, the Legislature made strategic investments in a public/private tourism initiative – one that focuses on marketing our great state and fine folks to the world.
- We passed several bills specifically designed to draw businesses and jobs to cities and rural areas that can benefit the most from this kind of assistance: economically distressed, transitional communities.

Gov. Gregoire signed into law a package of agriculture reform bills that prompted the Washington State Farm Bureau to honor Speaker of the House Frank Chopp for the Legislature's good work on behalf of farmers.

## Keeping Washington Safe

Much of what we do in Olympia rightly deals with improving our schools, brightening the economic picture and improving access to quality, affordable health care. Unfortunately, though, reality dictates that we spend time every year writing or rewriting the state's criminal laws – the rules that we all hope will help us protect our children and families, our homes, our property and our communities.

2006, for instance, will be remembered as the year Washington enacted some of the toughest sex-offender laws in the U.S. Prosecutors, cops and victims' advocates alike endorsed those

new laws as the best tools to keep the largest possible number of kids and other vulnerable people safe from sexual predators. When it comes to our children, though, even the best can be improved on, and in 2008 we're working to do just that.

What about 2007? Well, by the time the session ended we had sent approved bills to the governor's desk that . . .

- Deter car thefts;
- Make it easier to prosecute men and women who engage in domestic violence;
- Require much stronger safety precautions on job sites, including those where giant cranes could wreak havoc for blocks around if failures occur;
- Require fire-suppression sprinklers in nightclubs;
- Work to reduce back-sliding by criminals when they're released from prison;
- Put a priority on combating gang-related crimes; and
- Make the Internet safer for our children.

We're not finished. We'll never be finished as long as kids are being hurt, impaired drivers are on the road and other types of crime affect our lives and our property. But every step forward is a good step, and we'll keep taking them.

## The State Budgets: *Sane and Sustainable*

Balanced. Sustainable. Responsive and responsible. Those are some of the words observers from across the political spectrum have used to describe Washington's 2007-09 operating and capital budgets. I'm happy that we were able to write budgets that reflect our priorities – your priorities – and still receive bipartisan approval. I'm equally pleased that we were able to win bipartisan approval without hiking taxes or by slashing public services.

We're writing supplemental budgets this year to make mid-course adjustments to those biennial spending plans. As a housing advocate and a member of that legislative panel, I'll be working to further improve opportunities for everyone in Washington to have a safe, affordable place to call home. As a father and a member of the House Education Committee, I'll push this session for smart investments in our schools, from pre-K through grad school. And as vice chair of the House Capital Budget Committee, I'll remain on the lookout for prudent ways to build a better Washington and create good jobs with real benefits at the same time.

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## Proud Moments

In September, I was honored with the Proud Partner Award from the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. The Commission is the primary engine driving efforts to make housing affordable and available to everyone in our state who really wants a home. I've been trying to help the Commission achieve its goals throughout my legislative career. This generous award stemmed from my sponsorship this year of House Bill 1910, which will increase housing opportunities by using property tax exemptions as an incentive for developers to create affordable housing units in urban areas.



Another piece of recognition that I'm especially grateful for is the 2007 Legislator of the Year Award from the Washington Association for Career and Technical Education. I was honored to receive the award in 2005 as well, and I was very surprised when they notified me of this year's award. As a tradesman myself, I know very well the value of career and technical training, which is why I have fought so hard to give our state's outstanding high-school-level Skills Centers – including our own Spokane Skills Center – the funding and legislative support they deserve.

## How to reach me

My legislative aide-extraordinaire, Shannon Waechter, and I are back in Olympia for the 2008 session, so for now, the best ways to get in touch are calling, visiting or emailing me at the Olympia address below. Once the session has concluded, we'll reopen our Spokane office to serve you. Working as your representative is not a seasonal job for me, so please stay in touch throughout the year with your comments, questions, advice and opinions.

**Timm Ormsby**  
State Representative

P. O. Box 40600  
122F Legislative Bldg.  
Olympia WA 98504-0600

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